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EDITORIAL NOTES

The season has arrived when teachers are beginning to arrange their plans for the summer vacation. Fortunately these plans are coming to include in ever-increasing degree some kind of study which shall augment the efficiency of the subsequent year's work. When the first summer schools were opened there were misgivings in the minds of many as to the wisdom of summer study on the part of teachers; there were undoubtedly mistakes of overzealousness which justified some of these misgivings. With the accumulation of experience, however, the most skeptical must be convinced, for in all parts of the country there come together a great number of teachers and they derive benefits of such undoubted advantage that there is a steady increase in the demand for such opportunities.

It is not alone the teachers who derive advantages from summer schools; the institutions which carry on the work profit greatly by contact with the summer constituency. No plan could possibly have been devised which would have operated more successfully than does the summer school to keep universities and schools of all other grades in closest contact. A university teacher of history or science or English working with college students or even with ordinary graduate students may get out of touch with what is actually developing in the surrounding schools; but this same university teacher before his summer class can never lose sight of the school problem. He will be plied with questions fresh from the classroom of the schools; he will be called to book very promptly if he indulges in any unwarranted speculations about the way in which subjects should be presented. On the other side the teacher in the schools does not need to deal at long range through books with the best authorities; the teacher of geography or history or drawing can find some institution which puts him

into direct contact with leading authorities. These institutional contacts can be called by-products of the main work of the summer school, which is the training of the individual teacher, but from a larger view they are to be regarded as of prime importance.

The purpose of the present editorial is, however, not mere comment on the value of summer-school courses. There are certain questions which are constantly being turned over in the minds of prospective summer students on which it may not be out of place to offer the light of institutional experience. Most students want to take more courses than they can pursue with profit. Better a single course well assimilated than many courses hastily skimmed. Better a limit of two or at most three, than an open temptation to get all one can crowd into the day. Someone has described a summer-school student as a person so eager for credits that he cannot stop to get an education. There is another type of student who tries to do too much, namely the student who at great sacrifice has reached the institution for perhaps the only summer that he can afford in a long period of years. With all due regard to the importance of credits and the value of an opportunity when one is on the ground, let the warning be clear and emphatic: take few courses and do them thoroughly.

A second important question is, What kind of courses shall one take? There are always courses of a so-called professional character which deal with the theory or philosophy of education or with methods or with educational psychology. On the other side there are courses in subject-matter such as courses in geography, mathematics, manual arts, and reading. Shall one take professional courses or courses in subject-matter?

There can be no doubt that the necessity of preparing for examinations of one sort or another has given the professional courses some advantage. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that what most teachers need is subject-matter. Many a teacher is misled by someone's advice into a course in educational psychology when what he or she needs is a good course in plane

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geometry or elementary geography. There are some students at summer school who will not take anything but advanced courses when what they need is elementary courses. There should be much greater care in the selection of courses. If one's superintendent or principal suggests a summer at this or that institution, let the student canvass the matter carefully before he goes, let him select the courses which he needs, not those which will exhibit the greatest devotion to advanced theory. Summer-school students with their own experience in teaching to guide them ought to be very judicious in the selection of their courses; the fact is that they very often are not at all judicious.

A third matter on which comment certainly needs to be made is the matter of visiting courses in which one does not do the reading or written work or take the examination. Such visiting is usually related to the mistake referred to in the paragraph above on undertaking too many courses. The theory of such visiting is that one can pick up without much effort, in a fashion suitable to vacation, some information and some culture. Possibly in some rare cases benefit is derived from visiting. How a teacher of experience can sanction in his or her own person this utterly unpedagogical method of attaching oneself to culture is difficult to understand. There is no such thing as passive reception of knowledge. Any teacher young enough to go to summer school is not too old to acquire bad habits of mind by indulgence in visiting. The cure for visiting is to take one course and do it well. The value of this one course will be not merely the knowledge gained, but also the taste for real acquisition.

The purpose of this editorial will be served if it leads its readers to plan in advance the work which many of them will undertake this summer. It is astonishing to see how unformed are the plans of many who come to summer schools. Consultation at home with one's associates, consultation by letter with the university which one is to attend, consideration of one's own need before starting, these are the lines of preparation which these paragraphs are intended to suggest.

Visiting Courses

Careful Planning before Registering